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THE PROBLEM OF SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION
IN THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

George H. Tavard, in a recent article,¹ briefly discusses the nature of an ecumenical problem, pointing out that an ecumenical problem is one that lies at the center of the ecumenical movement.

At the center of the ecumenical movement today there are a few key questions, and these alone I would call ecumenical problems. This does not imply that if these fundamental questions were solved the ecumenical movement would have reached its goal. For a number of questions still have to be answered. Yet we ought to restrict the expression "ecumenical problem" to points that are truly central, to the basic knots that have to be untied before there can be any thought of reunion of Christians. Thus, defined ecumenical problems are few.²

Dr. Tavard sees two of the main problems as being those that found expression during the Reformation in the Sixteenth Century; that is, the principle of justification by faith and the principle of Scripture as the only source of faith.

During the last several generations in Europe, there has been a growing exchange among the scholars of various churches. These exchanges can be called ecumenical in that they have been concerned with the differences that have

¹George H. Tavard, "The Holy Tradition," Dialogue for Reunion the Catholic Premises, Leonard Swidler, (ed.) (New York:Herder and Herder, 1962), 54-58.

²Ibid., 54.

contributed to the separation of the churches. It is the hope that discussion will lead to a mutual understanding that will pave the way to an eventual and fully realized unity. Many began to see that a divided church could not hope to minister to a divided world.

Christian disunity has not gone unnoticed in the United States, but it was not until 1959, and Pope John XXIII's proposal of the Second Vatican Council that an open exchange began between the separated Christian churches.³ It should be quickly pointed out that unity of some sort was discussed long before 1959. The merger of several churches into the United Church of Christ, as an example, shows us clearly that unity was under consideration. But it was not until Pope John's pronouncement that any solid consideration was given to the total unity of the followers of Christ, including the Roman and Eastern Orthodox Churches. From this point, as in Europe, there began an open exchange of publications and discussion among the scholars and leaders of the various churches. From that point, new publications were released by both Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians and laymen; publications that spoke openly of union. Thus, all were able to read works, such as the one above, that are concerned

³Leonard Swidler (ed.), Dialogue for Reunion the Catholic Premises (New York:Herder and Herder, 1962), 7 ff.

with the central problems of a movement that will hopefully lead to a unity of all Christians.

Dr. Tavard's article is important for many reasons, but a central point is that he discusses a problem of the ecumenical movement, an ecumenical problem. The discussion that has centered around unity has left the point of why unity is necessary to a more important point of how unity is to be accomplished. As we have seen, he states that certain problems must first be solved if unity is going to be considered. Professor John Knox, in his book The Early Church and the Coming Great Church, has shown that the church has never really known a physical unity.⁴ This was a disunity that found expression in the early church's polity and institutional framework; but now, the church's disunity is expressed also in theological differences. It is the theological differences that must now be overcome first if the church is ever to minister to the world as a unified body.

One such theological difference centers around the controversy of what is commonly called Scripture and Tradition. "Christianity came into the world as a religion of revelation, and as such claimed a supernatural origin for its message."⁵

⁴John Knox, The Early Church and the Coming Great Church (New York-Nashville:Abingdon Press, 1955).

⁵J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines (2nd ed.) (New York:Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1960), 29.

All Christians will agree that the supernatural origin of that message is God, that is, the source of the revelation in Jesus Christ is God. The matter becomes a problem though when disagreement arises as to how that revelation is preserved. In a later chapter, the background of this disagreement will be discussed in detail, but for our purposes, at the Reformation in the Sixteenth Century, we find that an impasse had occurred. By that time, we find that the Reformers had reached a point where they held that God's revelation in Jesus Christ was preserved in Scripture alone, while those of what was to be called the Roman Catholic Church held that the revelation was in not only Scripture, but in also the oral tradition that had been handed down by the Apostles and carried on by the church. The problem became one of authority. What was to be the authority for faith? Was it to be Scripture alone, or could authority be found in the Apostolic tradition that is said to be found in both Scripture and the teachings of the church. Thus, by the end of the Counter-Reformation we have a situation of Scripture versus Tradition. Which, then, is the authority for faith? We find a situation where Scripture and Tradition are exclusive of one another, an apparent impasse between the Protestants and Roman Catholics. It is felt by some that this situation remains today, that the impasse cannot be overcome

and so unity is out of the question.

It is the purpose of this paper to investigate the problem and confusion of Scripture and Tradition. This writer agrees with Dr. Tavadar when he states that the ecumenical problems must first be solved if the Ecumenical Movement is to succeed.⁶ The problem of Scripture and Tradition is a matter that must be dealt with immediately. This writer feels that the problem of Scripture and Tradition is more of a matter of confusion rather than being an impasse. An attempt will be made to show that recent scholarship in Protestant and Roman Catholic circles point to a convergence of the two lines of approach. Hopefully, it will be clearly shown that the problem is not Scripture versus Tradition, but rather the relation between the two. This will then lead us to the point where we will see not an impasse but the start of an answer.

To accomplish this end, a chapter on the historical development of the problem will be included. Two chapters will survey recent works by both Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians in the area of Scripture and Tradition. A final chapter will consider where the theologians agree or disagree and also will deal with this writer's opinion of the eventual outcome of the problem of Scripture and Tradition and its relation to the ecumenical movement.

⁶Tavard, Dialogue for Reunion: The Catholic Premises p 54.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND

Somehow we have reached our modern period with an understanding of the problem of Scripture and Tradition that has come under close examination by both Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians. As we shall see, the concept of Scripture and Tradition is a result of the Council of Trent. But, for our purpose, it is important that some light be thrown on the problem as it has developed from the period of the early church, through the Council of Trent in 1546.

A. The Apostolic Church

The apostle is not himself a master, but a servant of the one and only Lord. He has neither invented nor found in himself what he proclaims. It exists as is created and posited by God.¹

In the above quote, Dr. Barth is speaking of the apostolic witness to the word of God. Dr. Barth sees this witness as an echo of what the apostles had seen in Jesus Christ, and not an independent voice. So, in the first days of the church, we have a situation where the apostles, those who had seen and known the Lord, carried the message of God on to others; thus, an apostolic tradition. Dr. Tavard puts

¹Karl Barth, "The Doctrine of God," Church Dogmatics, ed. Rev. G. W. Bromiley and Rev. Prof. T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1957) II, 2497.

it in this way:

Thus understood, tradition is the art of passing on the Gospel. It is not distinct from the Good News of Christ. Rather, it is the power of the Gospel itself which inspires the devotion and loyalty of the men and churches responsible for its transmission. Tradition is made by the Gospel.²

Scripture for the Apostolic Church was also a source of revelation. In this case, Scripture refers to those documents we now call the Old Testament, but it was felt by the Apostolic Church that these documents, inspired by God, revealed the promise of God which was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

It is at this place that the point must be made that Tradition, Scripture and Kerygma cannot be separated. All contained the Good News, the Gospel that God was acting in Christ to save the world. The Gospel then for the Apostolic Church was contained in all three; Tradition, Scripture and Kerygma. The Gospel was given to the apostles and they in turn transmitted this orally to others. It is this writer's opinion that this oral transmission should be emphasized, and it is difficult to over exaggerate the importance of the apostles' function in the Apostolic Church. "The message of the Gospel stands or falls by their testimony as eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word."³

²George H. Tavad, Holy Writ or Holy Church (London: Burns and Oates, 1959), 3.

³G.W.H. Lampe, "The Early Church," Scripture and Tradition ed. F.W. Dillistone (Greenwich: The Seabury Press, 1955) 25.

Thus, we have a situation in the Apostolic Church where there was in fact no separation of Scripture and Tradition. That which was necessary for salvation was contained in the oral testimony of the apostles as exemplified in Acts 4:23-31.

Most will agree that the oral testimony of the apostles preceeded any writings of the Apostolic Church.⁴ It is also agreed by most that the church began to write down the oral testimony of the apostles when it appeared that Christ's coming again was not to be as soon as expected. For reasons of distance and difficult communications, there was no one established collection of books, but it appears that separate churches began to gather the books together, primarily for two purposes: (1) to retain in written form, the oral tradition or testimony of the apostles, and (2) to establish some norm of liturgical practice. Dr. Tavad speaks of this:

The churches that set out to define the books which they received did not do so to establish a source of faith. Rather, they tried to regulate a liturgical practice.⁵

Regarding the retention of the apostolic tradition, Lampe states:

The formation of a definite canon, like the development of the use of the word *paradosis* in the sense of "transmitted and authoritative

⁴Although there may be some who would not agree with this statement, the writer has been unable to find a statement to the contrary.

⁵Tavad, Holy Writ or Holy Church, 5.

Christian teaching" does not begin until the church has been forced by Marcion and the Gnostics to define its authoritative standard of doctrine."⁶

Dr. Cullmann takes somewhat the same position:

By setting up the principle of a canon (the fixing of its final limits came later) the church of the second century did not only take up a position with regard to the difficulties that arose at that particular time, especially as regards Gnosticism Within this framework revelation will continue to be granted to the church.⁷

As we can see then, great emphasis was laid on the oral tradition of the apostles. This was written down to retain it for future generations, but it was also handed down orally in liturgical practice for the same reason. So, it must be said that the church of this early period did not separate Scripture, the written witness of the apostles, from Tradition, the oral witness from which Scripture was interpreted, that was handed down from generation to generation. Both contained the word of God, the Gospel as witness to by the apostles.

B. The Fathers

In the previous section, we were primarily concerned with the Apostolic Church but as is quite obvious, it was difficult not to also run over into the period of church history in

⁶Lampe, 26.

⁷Oscar Cullmann, The Early Church, ed. A.J.B. Higgins (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), 91.

which the Fathers wrote and preached. Once again, it is this writer's contention that in this period there was also no separation of Scripture and Tradition. Both contained the witness of the apostles, both were of the church in that they contained the Word on which the church was grounded. Both Scripture and Tradition have a common basis in the work of the Holy Spirit.

It must also be remembered that it was at the time of the Fathers that a canon was more or less formalized. It is not necessary for our purposes to trace this process, but it is important to note that Scripture has found a new meaning. As has been noted, in the Apostolic Church, Scripture referred to those documents we call the Old Testament. Now, in the period of the Fathers, Scripture came to mean the writings of Israel, the Old Testament, but also the writings of the Apostolic Church, and the New Testament.

Tradition also began to have a dual meaning for the Fathers.

Tradition is not understood as an addition to the Kerygma contained in Scripture, but either⁸ as the handing down of that kerygma in living form, or as revelation itself.⁹

⁸Italics mine.

⁹Heiko A. Oberman, "Quo Vadis? Tradition from Irenaeus to Humani Generis," Scottish Journal of Theology, XVI, No 3, (September, 1963), 227.

Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis speaks of the importance of Tradition as well as Scripture:

I shall not hesitate to set down for you...all things which I learnt from the elders with care and recorded with care being well assured of their truth.¹⁰

Dr. Tavard in his book Holy Writ or Holy Church sees Tradition in the times of the Fathers as:

the overflow of the Word outside Sacred Scripture. It was neither separate from nor identical with Holy Writ. Its contents were the "other scriptures" through which the Word made himself know.¹¹

Dr. Tavard points out that the above was reversed, in part, to where Tradition came to mean the handing down of a deposit of faith by the Church. This deposit of faith included the written Word of God. This new position is important and so several points must be made:

1. The deposit of faith came under the stewardship of the Church.
2. The deposit of faith was included in Scripture and Tradition. There is no separation at this point, for both contained the Word of God.
3. Tradition came to mean the standard by which Scripture was interpreted. As well, Tradition could not be valid if it contradicted Scripture.

¹⁰Henry Bettenson (ed.), Documents of the Christian Church (2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 38.

¹¹Tavard, Holy Writ or Holy Church, 80.

4. It was the Church that determined what was in fact the true deposit of faith.

As can be seen, the Church has a new position as the guardian and transmitter of the faith. We can find example of this in the following segments taken from the works of some of the Fathers.

Irenaeus for one, saw that the rule of faith was preserved by the Church.¹² Because of this, he pays special attention to the authority of the Church that is found in apostolic succession. The Church, its authority manifested in the bishop, has the work of guardian of the faith because it was the Apostles who appointed the bishops. The bishops then carry on the rule of faith, and all who disagree with this rule are in fact heretics, outside the faith.

Yet when we appeal again to that tradition which is derived from the Apostles, and which is safeguarded in the churches through the successions of presbyters, they (sc. the heretics) then are adversaries of tradition, claiming to be wiser not only than the presbyters but even than the Apostles, and to discover the truth undefiled.¹³

Tertullian sees the origins of the authority of the Church in the same manner:

But if any of these (heresies) are bold enough to insert themselves into the Apostolic age, in order to seem to have been handed down

¹²Oberman, 229.

¹³Bettenson, 96.

from the Apostles because they existed under the Apostles, we can say: Let them then produce the origins of their churches; let them unroll the lists of their bishops, an unbroken succession from the beginning so that that first bishop had as his precursor and as the source of his authority one of the Apostles one of the Apostolic men who, though not an Apostle, continued with the Apostles.¹⁴

Thus, we can see that the Fathers saw that the Apostles received two things from Jesus Christ; the Word and the authority to preach the Word. This in turn was given to the Church in the form of bishops. As has been stated, it is this writer's opinion that no separation can be made between Scripture and Tradition in this period. In order to clarify this point, it is best that a distinction in terms be made. There is but one Tradition; that is the Apostolic Tradition. This Tradition finds two expressions, Scripture and Tradition. Scripture is the written expression of the Apostolic Tradition. Tradition, which is the oral expression, is a process of handing down the Apostolic Tradition from generation by both preaching and the interpretation of Scripture. Of this, Dr. Oberman states:

For this period, it is not relevant to insist on the usual distinction between active tradition, the act of handing down, and passive tradition, the content of what is being handed down.¹⁵

¹⁴Ibid., 100.

¹⁵Oberman, 232.

Thus, Tradition is both revelation and the handing down of revelation, as Scripture is both revelation and the writing down of revelation. For the Fathers, there could be no separation between the two. Both contain that which has been given to the Church through the Apostles, the Word. One final point must be made regarding Tradition. The Fathers saw Tradition as only that which could be found in Scripture. Tradition was living in that it was always interpreting Scripture, but never did the Fathers accept an extra-Scriptural oral Tradition. Tradition, if it truly carried the Word, could be found in Scripture.

C. The Middle Ages

But there were many other things which Jesus did; were everyone of them written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. (John 21:25 RSV)

As we have seen, the Fathers of the early Church saw no separation of Scripture and Tradition. All truth lay in the Scripture, and it was only within the Church that the truth could be interpreted and handed down (Tradition) uncorrupted.

This concept of Tradition, the interpretation of Scripture by the Church and handed down within the Church did not remain. Although it cannot be agreed on when it happened, most will agree that the Middle Ages witnessed a breakdown

in the above concept.¹⁶ Although the discussion between Dr. Tavard and Dr. Oberman is important in itself, we must for our own purposes leave future investigation of the discussion to any interested reader and simply state that sometime in the Medieval Period, the two-sources theory was established. This is to say that along with the concept of Tradition found in the early Church, the theory that equal reverence was due to both Scriptural and extra-Scriptural oral Tradition was established. Dr. Oberman defines the situation in the following way:

If for clarity's sake we call the single-source or exegetical tradition of Scripture held together with its interpretation "Tradition I" and the two-sources theory which allows for an extra-biblical oral tradition "Tradition II", we may say that both Tradition I and Tradition II had their medieval partisans.¹⁷

For Dr. Oberman then Tradition I and Tradition II represented two understandings of the problem. Tradition I represents the stand of the Fathers where Scripture had the final authority. Tradition II represented the new concept of

¹⁶This difference of opinion is best exemplified in the works of Dr. George Tavard, Holy Writ or Holy Church and Dr. Heiko A. Oberman, The Harvest of Medieval Theology. While both agree to a decline in the early Church concept of Scripture and Tradition in the medieval period, Dr. Tavard sees this as a late occurrence of the 14th century (pp. 22-43). Dr. Oberman, rather sees the decline very early in Basil the Great and Augustine in the 4th and 5th centuries. (pp. 369-371).

¹⁷Heiko A. Oberman, The Harvest of Medieval Theology.

two sources with equal respect for both. It must be remembered that Tradition I can in no way be confused with the implied sola Scriptura stand of the Reformation. The Fathers and those who held to the concept of Tradition I all considered tradition important and the Church remained as the preserver of the truth through the authority of Apostolic succession. The conflict came when those who held to Tradition II, appealed to extra-scriptural tradition that could not be found in Scripture. Thus, in the late medieval period, the problem was not one of Scripture against Tradition, rather, theologians of that period posed Tradition I against Tradition II.¹⁸ Certainly, the above is not a full investigation of the Medieval period regarding our problem, but it does lead us to the period of the Church when separation became a reality, the Reformation.

D. The Reformation

And our observation concerning the later Middle Ages can be applied to the period of Reformation and Counter-Reformation: We are here not confronted with the alternatives of Scripture and tradition but with the clash of two radically different concepts of tradition: Tradition I and Tradition II.¹⁹

¹⁸Oberman, Scottish Journal of Theology, XVI, No. 3, 240.

¹⁹Ibid., 241.

Luther writes in the Babylonian Captivity of the Church:

"For what is asserted without the Scripture or proven revelation may be held as an opinion, but need not be believed."²⁰

In the above, Luther is rejecting all extra-Scriptural oral Tradition. A survey of Luther's works will show that he appeals constantly to Scripture also for the rule of faith. This then is his sola scriptura principle that is so popular today. At this time, the point must be made once again, that Luther was not rejecting tradition,²¹ but rather extra-Scriptural oral tradition. So, we must agree with Dr. Oberman. Luther was advancing Tradition I, the single source theory of revelation. Luther was obedient to the Word of God and saw that the Church was always under the judgment of that Word, as found in the witness of the Apostles contained in Scripture. For Luther, final authority lay in Scripture and not in human utterances, that is, papal decisions.

Here it is, plain and unvarnished. Unless I am convicted of error by the testimony of Scripture or (since I put no trust in the unsupported authority of Pope or of Councils, since it is plain that they have often erred and often contradicted themselves) by manifest reasoning I stand convicted by the Scriptures to which I have appealed, and my conscience is taken captive by God's word, I cannot and will

²⁰Martin Luther, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," Three Treatises (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), 145.

²¹We note here Luther's reference to the Fathers, particularly Augustine.

not recant anything, for to act against our conscience is neither safe for us, nor open to us.²²

Luther has then rejected the authority of the papacy and councils over the Scriptures. He accepts rather, the authority of the Scripture and the Church's right to interpret Scripture, that is tradition. In this area then he is accepting Tradition I, Scripture interpreted by the Church.

Once again, the discussion has been limited to only a small segment of the whole of the situation, but we are now at the point to state the position of the Counter-Reformation as seen in the Council of Trent, 1546.

E. The Counter-Reformation

The Holy, Oecumenical and General Synod of Trent...having this aim always before its eyes, that errors may be removed and the purity of the Gospel be preserved in the Church, which was before promised through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures and which our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God first published by his own mouth and then commanded to be preached through his Apostles to every creature as a source of all saving truth and of discipline of conduct; and perceiving that this truth and this discipline are contained in written books and in unwritten traditions, which were received by the Apostles from the lips of Christ himself, or by the same Apostles at the dictation of the Holy Spirit, and were handed on and have come down to us; following the example of the orthodox fathers this Synod receives and venerates, with equal pious affection and reverence, all the books both of the New and the Old Testaments, since

²²Bettenson, 282.

one God is the author of both, together with the said Traditions, as well as those pertaining to morals, as having been given either from the lips of Christ or by the dictation of the Holy Spirit and preserved by unbroken succession in the Catholic Church.²³

We have come to the point where opinion is no longer opinion, but rather a statement of the Church. The Christian Truth is now found in both Scripture and the extra-scriptural oral tradition. Equal authority can be found in both; equal respect is due to both. Tradition was no longer that which interpreted Scripture, now, it also contained part of the truth of the Christian faith.

We have tried to show in some detail the background and development of the problem of Scripture and Tradition through the history of the church to the Council of Trent. As we have seen, the issues were fairly defined at the Council of Trent and it can be said that the same definitions remain today on the popular level. It is now our duty to review the work being done today to see what answers, if any, are being presented to this important problem of the Ecumenical Movement.

²³Ibid., 368.

CHAPTER III

THE PROBLEM OF SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION TODAY:

THE ROMAN CATHOLICS

At this time, we will consider the work being done by the modern Roman Catholic theologians. At the first session of Vatican II, discussion at one point was centered on the sources of Revelation. Xavier Rynne in his book, Letters from Vatican City,¹ discusses in detail the debate that centered around the schema "De Revelatione" as prepared by the Preparatory Theological Commission under Cardinal Ottaviani. As an introduction to the debate, Rynne states:

From the very first the opposite sides in the Church were locked in heated debate, for this was one of the most important issues before the Council--basic in a sense, to all else. Recent years have witnessed a swing by many Catholic theologians away from the view largely favored since the Council of Trent that the Bible and tradition are separate, virtually independent sources of divine revelation. They have returned to the older position wherein scripture and tradition must not be thought of as completely independent of each other but as constituting a whole--two modes, the written and unwritten, by which the word of God comes down to us within the framework of the Church. As Father Yves Congar, O. P., a spokesman for the new outlook puts it: "There is not a single dogma which the Church holds by Scripture alone, not a single dogma which holds by tradition

¹Xavier Rynne, Letters from Vatican City (New York: Farrar, Straus & Co., 1963), 140-173.

alone." Obviously this view is also much closer to the traditional Protestant thesis of the "Bible and the Bible alone." The new tendency was ignored by the Theological Commission when working on its draft.²

It is these spokesmen of what Xavier Rynne calls "the new outlook" in which we are particularly interested at this time.

Father Jean Danielou, S. J., in his God and the Ways of Knowing,³ speaks of the problem of Scripture and Tradition:⁴

The question is, in fact, whether the authority on which we base our certainty with regard to the Trinity of Persons in God is Scripture alone, or whether it is the evidence of a community assisted by the Spirit of God, and expressed both through Scripture and through living Tradition.⁵

Father Danielou sees the revelation of the Trinity in the New Testament. It is in the New Testament in which the teachings of the Apostles are found, and it is the successors of the Apostles, the Church to which the guardianship of the Apostolic teaching belongs. It is thus through the Church that the teaching of the Apostles of the revelation of Christ is transmitted on to each generation.

²Ibid., 141.

³Jean Danielou, God and the Ways of Knowing, trans. Walter Roberts (New York:Meridian Books, 1962).

⁴Ibid., 174-214.

⁵Ibid., 174 ff.

Father Danielou centers part of his discussion around a criticism of Oscar Cullmann. Dr. Cullmann sees the fixing of the Canon as the end of revelation. After this point, it is for the Church to refer back to Scripture to regain the Apostolic message. By submitting to the Canon then, the Church releases all claim to infallibility. Dr. Danielou agrees with Dr. Cullmann in part:

The Church, by fixing the Canon, brought Revelation to an end, but not infallibility.... The difference between Apostolic and ecclesiastical times is that between revelation and tradition, not between infallibility and fallibility. The Church is as infallible in transmitting the deposit as the Apostles were in revealing it.⁶

Thus, for Father Danielou, we can see that tradition is not revelation, rather it is "strictly divine action;"⁷ it is the transmission of the Apostolic witness to God's Action in Christ. The Church is infallible in that it will transmit their teaching without error. Tradition then is the transmission of revelation within the Church. Father Danielou points to one example of Tradition within the Church, the Apostles' Creed. Dr. Cullmann sees the authority of the Creed in its origins, the Apostles. Father Danielou points out that J. N. D. Kelly⁸ has shown that the Apostles' Creed

⁶Ibid., 183.

⁷Ibid.

⁸J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrine.

is, in fact, one of several and it includes a "dogmatic development in relation to the New Testament."⁹ This is important for Father Danielou, for the Creed then becomes, not a deposit of the Apostles, but rather an "expression of the official interpretation by the Church of the written revelation."¹⁰

So, we find in Father Danielou that Scripture and Tradition are the sources of revelation. Both hold the teaching of the Apostles, one written, the other unwritten. Father Danielou does not take the position of revelation being partly in Scripture and partly in Tradition. One is the written form of the Apostolic message; the other is the interpretation of the written form by the Church as it has transmitted the message from one generation to the next in the Creeds and Sacraments. For Father Danielou, Tradition will never contradict Scripture.

Dr. Karl Rahner has also written of the problem of Scripture and Tradition and the infallibility of the Church.¹¹ We have seen that following Trent, it became a popular notion that Scripture and Tradition were in fact two separate

⁹Danielou, 186.

¹⁰Ibid., 187.

¹¹Karl Rahner, Inspiration in the Bible (New York:Herder and Herder, 1962), 30-80. Dr. Rahner echoes his point of view in his Theological Investigations, Vol I (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1961).

sources of revelation. This reached a point where the oral tradition of the Church was used to support dogmatic statements that had no basis in the Bible. Dr. Rahner states: "Today we realize that the Council of Trent made no decision at all in this sense."¹² Rahner rather sees Trent as saying only that the Church is the guardian of Scripture "and that the Two-Sources Theory (to coin a phrase) is but a possible interpretation of the Council which is not supported by the unanimous opinion either of the Fathers or of the medieval theologians."¹³

Dr. Rahner, rejecting the two sources theory, discusses the sufficiency of Scripture. God, as the originator of the Church is also the originator of the Scriptures. By this, he means that Scripture is inspired. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that brings the Church to the point where it can see that Scripture is inspired when compared to other uninspired documents. The teaching of the Church about the Scripture was and is infallible because it was the teaching from the very first. Thus, for Dr. Rahner, there are two infallibilities, the infallibility of Scripture and the infallibility of the Church in its teaching about the Scripture.

¹²Rahner, Inspiration in the Bible, 35.

¹³Ibid., p. 36.

Infallibility of the teaching authority of the later Church is, by definition, the inerrant interpretation of Scripture, because it includes by definition the link with the teaching of the early Church, which necessarily teaches the later Church and has expressed her teaching in Scripture.¹⁴

For Dr. Rahner then, Scripture, Tradition and the infallibility of the Church are related. All find their roots in the Apostolic witness of the revelation in Jesus Christ. One does not rely on the other for its existence, the existence of all three lays in the fact that God was in Christ. Scripture then is the source of a norm of faith because it was inspired by God and written by Christians for future generations. Tradition is also a norm in that the teachings of the Church about the revelation in Jesus Christ have been from the first. Because of this, the Church is infallible as the Scripture is infallible, for both rise out of the early Church. Gregory Baum, O. S. A. shows somewhat the same position.

The Bible is not a book that can be understood by itself; it can be understood only through the testimony of the Holy Ghost which the Lord has communicated to the Apostles, and through them to the whole Church.¹⁵

Josef Rupert Geiselman, in his article "Scripture

¹⁴Rahner, Inspiration in the Bible, 72.

¹⁵Gregory Baum, That They May be One (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1958), 93.

Tradition, and the Church: An Ecumenical Problem"¹⁶ warns that the post-Trent teachings of the Two Sources Theory should not be confused as official teachings of the Church. Trent, he also feels, did not make a decision about the relation of Scripture and Tradition.¹⁷ It was only after Trent, that the two sources theory became popular. This view he states is basically "un-Catholic."¹⁸ Scripture and Tradition are not like water taps marked hot and cold turned off and on by God, rather they "mediate the entire Gospel, though each does so differently."¹⁹ The statement of Trent was a reaction to the sola Scriptura principle of the Reformation; Trent in this case asserting the traditions that do exist in the Church. Dr. Geiselman also finds common origins for Scripture, Tradition and the Church.²⁰ All find their source in God's revelation in Jesus Christ. All grew together and so stand together. To separate any one from the others is to isolate it and make it meaningless. This is to say, that Scripture, when separated from the living tradition and the living Church is to deprive the Scriptures of their own living character. "Thus, Holy

¹⁶Josef Rupert Geiselman, "Scripture, Tradition, and the Church: An Ecumenical Problem," Christianity Divided, ed. Daniel J. Callahan, Heiko A. Obermann, and Daniel J. O'Hanlan, (London and New York:Sheed and Ward, 1962), 34-72.

¹⁷Ibid., 48.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., 49.

²⁰Ibid., 52 ff.

Scripture, Tradition and the life and devine service of the Church become a living unity which suffers no dividing."²¹

So, for Dr. Geiselman, Scripture is sufficient, but only when interpreted by the living Tradition within the context of the living Church.

Perhaps one of the clearest statements regarding the problem of Scripture and Tradition is that of George Tavard in his article on "The Holy Tradition."²² In this article, Dr. Tavard discusses the new discussion that has arisen in the last few decades between Protestants and Catholics. In his discussion, Dr. Tavard shows that the Reformers and those who stand in that position today, do not reject all concepts of Tradition. Too much reference is made to the Fathers to allow such a statement to be made. Rather, disagreement between Protestants and Catholics occur where it comes to the point if such a Tradition has been endowed with the authority of the Word. Dr. Tavard points to one Protestant who might hold to this position, Flesseman-Van Leer, in his Scripture and Tradition in the Early Church.²³ In this book, Flesseman-Van Leer points out that Tradition is the

²¹ Ibid., 54.

²² Tavard, Dialogue for Reunion the Catholic Premises, 54-88.

²³ Ibid., 59.

preaching form of the Word. The Word has been given to us in Scripture, but it is dead until it finds expression in preaching. The Word must be spoken. "Tradition is simply the Word of God when it is no longer contained in a closed book but is preached out of an open book."²⁴ Tradition then is the Word of God as contained in Scripture, preached, that is to say communicated by the Church from one generation to another. Dr. Tavard points to this trend as important in future ecumenical discussions,²⁵ but we will deal with the Protestant work in the following chapter. For our purposes now, it is important only to note Dr. Tavard's position in this important matter. Dr. Tavard rejects the idea that the "two source theory" was a result of the Council of Trent. The Council, he states, "used the word 'source' (fons) in the singular: there is one source of the faith, the Gospel."²⁶ The source of faith then is the Gospel which is contained in the Scripture and the Tradition. Dr. Tavard points out that the Council did not explain what form the Gospel is in either, so the relation between the Bible and the tradition "remained--and still remains--an open question."²⁷

²⁴Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., 66.

²⁵Ibid., 60.

²⁷Ibid.

Dr. Tavard points out lines which he feels would be fruitful areas of dialogue with Protestants:

1. A tendency among Roman Catholic theologians today appears to be that Scripture contains all revelation in that it is the only posit of faith of the primitive Church. But, he is quick to state that "the Catholic Church is the only interpreter of Scripture."²⁸ The interpretation of Scripture then is Tradition, the living interpretation by the living Body of Christ, the Church.

2. Dr. Tavard also points to the liturgical aspect of the interpretation of Scripture by the Church as a way to fruitful dialogue with Protestants, particularly those who are aware of the liturgical character of the Church.²⁹ Thus, it is also through the Liturgy, the work of the people, that Protestants and Roman Catholics may reach a common ground of understanding, for it is through the Liturgy that the Gospel is also handed down from generation to generation.

Dr. Tavard centers much of his interest around the relationship between Tradition and the Church. He gets to this point by first affirming that "Scripture and the Church are inseparable."³⁰ There can be no contradiction between the two for the Church is the fulfillment of

²⁸Ibid., 67.

²⁹Ibid., 67 ff.

³⁰Ibid., 81.

Scripture, "that Scripture is the infallible speaking of the Word of God achieving what it means."³¹ For Dr. Tavad, the important point becomes that the Word of God must be spoken. The Scriptures are only a book unless that which they contain, the Word of God, is spoken. The Word of God is spoken in and by the Church for it is the Church only that understands the Word. The way in which it is understood by the Church is the Tradition of the Church. "Tradition is thus the interpretation of Scripture in the Church."³²

In a sense, this concept of Tradition is all-inclusive. Tradition is the Church's life, in which the Scriptures are accomplished by the Holy Spirit and explained in their very fulfillment. Tradition is the gift of the forgiveness of sin, of the good news of salvation; it is, in a word, the Gospel as embodied, manifested and achieved in the Church's life through the centuries. This includes the acts of the Church: their sacraments, the symbols of faith, the councils and their decisions, the popes and bishops and their decrees, the theologians and their speculative labors.³³

Dr. Tavad brings some question to the above for "how can we distinguish between this Holy Tradition, in which the Word is spoken by the Spirit and the 'traditions of men' which are apparently intertwined with and woven into the former in the concrete daily life of the Church?"³⁴ Dr.

³⁰Ibid., 81.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., 82.

³³Ibid., 83.

³⁴Ibid., 84.

Tavard sees that many traditions of men can either obscure the Gospel or contradict the Christian concept of salvation. These he feels "should not be maintained." Such a guard can come only from the guidance of the Spirit as manifested in the right interpretation of the Church, that is, the Tradition. As Dr. Tavard states,

If there is an essential tradition, a divinely-guided interpretation of the Scriptures by their explanation and fulfillment in the Church, then the Spirit will see to it that it is always preserved and protected uncontaminated by traditions of men.³⁵

Dr. Tavard agrees in part with the Reformers. They were in part reacting to the traditions of men that obscured the Gospel. Since that time, he feels it has become possible "to discover a basic convergence in the Catholic Church's cult of Tradition as the Tradition of the Word and in the Reformers' essential concern for the pure preaching of the Word of God."³⁶

To say that the modern Roman Catholic thought has been completely covered in this chapter would be misleading. Scholars in the Roman Catholic Church have written many pages about this problem, but it is impossible to cover them all. But, it is possible to make a summary statement about the main line Roman Catholic position today:

³⁵Ibid., 86.

³⁶Ibid., 87.

1. A large group, if not a controlling party within the Roman Catholic Church still hold to the Two Sources Theory, or at least to a concept that is closely identified with this theory. We can find an example of this in Letters from Vatican City.³⁷

2. Other Roman Catholic theologians feel quite sure that the Council of Trent did not establish the Two Sources Theory. This was, they feel, rather a result of a post-Trent misinterpretation that became popular and remains popular today.

3. These same theologians, called by some the "new outlook," do not separate Scripture from Tradition. Both contain the Word of God, but in different forms; one written, one unwritten. All would agree that one is dead without the other. Scripture must be preached and tradition must be interpreted. Finally, all would identify Scripture and Tradition with the Church, for it is only within the Church that Scripture is understood to be what it is, the Word of God and thus rightly interpreted.

4. All of the "new outlook" do not see these positions as new, but rather, they understand their position to that of the Church from its earliest days. Also, they see a movement among certain Protestant theologians that would

³⁷ Rynne, 140-173.

make it appear that the Roman Church and certain Protestant Churches no longer follow separate lines, but now follow two paths that may meet, and thus, bring eventual unity to the Body of Christ.

We have reached the point where it is now time to survey some Protestant theologians to find their position on the problem of Scripture and Tradition.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROBLEM OF SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION TODAY:

THE PROTESTANTS

Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant point of view concerning the problem of Scripture and Tradition is as varied as there are Protestant traditions. Generally though, we can trace two lines that all of the traditions, in one way or another, would fall under: 1. Those who imply Scripture only and 2. Those who sense some meaning in tradition and so agree in part or wholly with those Roman Catholic theologians who are called the "new outlook".

Karl Barth is an important theologian in the Protestant tradition today. He has written on the problem of tradition and also, spends extensive pages on Holy Scripture.¹ Before both the proclamation and the Holy Scripture, the form of the Word of God was the revelation of God. It is only because God did reveal Himself that there is a Word of God.² Thus for Dr. Barth, there is but one authority which was and is manifested in the Apostolic proclamation and the Holy Scripture; that authority is the Word. For Dr. Barth, "the Bible is the witness of divine revelation",³ in that it

¹Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, I, 2, 457-740.

²Ibid., 457.

³Ibid., 462.

answers all questions concerning or about the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

Holy Scripture attests to the Church (and through the Church to the world) the revelation of God, Jesus Christ, the Word of God. The power in which it does so is the power of the object to which it bears witness and which has also made and fashioned it as that witness. The witness of Holy Scripture is therefore the witness of the Holy Spirit. --- By Him it became Holy Scripture.⁴

Thus for Dr. Barth, the authority lies with the Holy Scripture; not in itself, but rather because it is the witness to the revelation of God. The Bible is the witness of men, but it holds a superior position in that its content is the witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In a sense, the witness is a binding one, for it is the witness of those who were the first witnesses, the Apostles. This witness was expressed in Holy Scripture, so that now, when we listen to the Bible we are in fact listening to the Christ. There is but one Absolute for Barth. That is the Word of God, and the only way we can relate to the Word of God is through the Holy Scripture. Thus, if a member of the Church is to be obedient to the Word of God, he must be obedient to Holy Scripture, the oldest witness the Church has of Jesus Christ, the Word of God.

⁴Ibid., 538.

Dr. Barth does survey at length the historical development of tradition.⁵ Regarding the identity of Scripture and Tradition as two sources of revelation that followed Trent, Dr. Barth affirms that the only source of revelation is the Word of God which speaks to the Church only through the Holy Scriptures. Dr. Barth does refer to the Fathers, both of the early Church and the Reformation, but in doing so, he grants them no authority. Thus, tradition in no way is a source of revelation or authority. Once again, the word of God as manifested in the Holy Scripture is the only authority, the only source of revelation.

It is obvious from this short survey that Dr. Barth is not in any real agreement with the modern Roman Catholic theologians discussed in the previous chapter. He definitely holds to the sola scriptura principle, perhaps even more so than the Reformers of the sixteenth century.

Rudolf Bultmann is another Protestant theologian who has written about the problem of Tradition and Scripture, and this has been done in the context of the early Church.⁶ It is interesting to note that Dr. Bultmann has given little space to the problem in his work.

⁵Ibid., 544-572.

⁶Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York:Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 119-142.

"While every religion requires transmission, transmission or tradition in Christianity not only plays a special role but also takes on a peculiar character."⁷ Dr. Bultmann uses this theme of the special role of transmission or tradition in light of the New Testament writings; to show the important place the words of Jesus had in the early Church. The importance in this lies in the fact that Christianity is the proclaimer of the Word, of the Word received by the Apostles which was then transmitted on to the Church. For Dr. Bultmann then, Christianity is, because of the Word. He points out that as the early Church grew, many teachings and interpretations developed and soon began to confuse or obscure the tradition that had come through the Apostles. Soon it became necessary to establish a way to correct doctrine. The only way to such an authority was the oral tradition of the Apostles. This was hindered somewhat: "It was Gnosticism particularly which made oral tradition suspect."⁸ Dr. Bultmann goes on to point out that two other paths lay open to witness of the Apostles: (1) The bishops who were felt to have succession from the Apostles, and (2) The written tradition, the written deposits of the Apostolic witness. "The essential fact in determining what is to be regarded as authoritative Apostolic tradition for

⁷Ibid., 119.

⁸Ibid., 139.

the Church, the office of bishop and the weight of written tradition worked together."⁹ It was, according to Dr. Bultmann, the office of the bishop which in the end decided which writings were to be acceptable and the writings were to be interpreted. They were able to do so because of their relation to the Apostles through succession.

At first, one would think that Dr. Bultmann is accepting a place of authority for both Scripture and tradition, the interpretation of Scripture and its transmission. In part he is, much more than Dr. Barth, but mention must be made of one qualifying statement by Dr. Bultmann. He sees conflict in the eventual establishment of the Canon, and so sees these variations as a lack of disunity among the Church at large. The establishment of Scripture and its interpretation is relative because of its variations from area to area. Because of this then, Dr. Bultmann cannot give full authority to either Scripture or Tradition. Authority lies primarily in the proclamation of the Apostles as it is encountered by the hearer demanding of him a personal faith.

Emil Brunner also sees the final authority in Jesus Christ, the Word of God, while Scripture is the only source of the revelation of the Word of God. Scripture then is "the source of all that truth which possesses absolute

⁹Ibid., 141.

authority."¹⁰ He rejects any concept of Tradition as an equal source of the revelation of the Word of God.¹¹ For Dr. Brunner, to accept Scripture as authority instead of as source; to accept Tradition as source at all is to cloud the Word of God that was revealed in Jesus Christ. Scripture is the source in that it is the posit of the Apostolic witness to the Word of God which is encountered but not held in Scripture.

Dr. Brunner does not cancel tradition entirely, it has a "fundamental significance."¹² But, the important point should be made that the norm for tradition was laid out by the early Church in the Biblical canon just as was the criterion for proclamation.

But it is just as correct to say that the Word of Christ and the Apostles created the Church and its tradition, and that only that tradition, and proclamation, only that preaching existence of the Church which corresponds to this Word, is genuine Church tradition and genuine Church existence.¹³

Thus, tradition and proclamation become the historical mediation between Jesus Christ and us today, but to be genuine mediators they must correspond to the norm, Scripture.

¹⁰Emil Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1950), Dogmatics: I, 47.

¹¹Ibid., 108 f.

¹²Emil Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and Consummation, trans. David Cairns (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962) Dogmatics: III, 5.

¹³Ibid.

Dr. Brunner is apparently reacting to the popular "two source theory" of the post-Trent period. He allows for tradition, but it must be a tradition that does not conflict with Scripture. In a large sense, it is this writer's opinion that Dr. Brunner is close to the point of view of those Roman Catholic theologians of the "new outlook" in that he sees both Scripture and tradition as posits of the Apostolic witness. Of course, Scripture as the only tangible source of the Word of God must be the norm for all tradition as well as proclamation.

Paul Tillich also speaks of a norm, in this case, a norm for systematic theology.¹⁴ Dr. Tillich points out that the problem of a norm "arose very early in the history of the Church".¹⁵ This problem found both a material and a formal answer, the creed as a doctrinal norm and a heirarchy which was a formal norm. Both served the purpose of guardian against heretical doctrine. Dr. Tillich traces the quest for a norm of authority throughout the history of the Church, and reaches a point where he states that no norm can be agreed on except the reality of the 'New Being.'¹⁶ Regarding the New Being, Dr. Tillich states:

¹⁴Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago:The University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 47-52.

¹⁵Ibid., 47.

¹⁶Ibid., 49.

It is based on what Paul calls the 'new creation' and refers to its power of overcoming the demonic cleavages of the 'old reality' in soul, society and universe. If the Christian message is understood as the message of the 'New Being', an answer is given to the question implied in our present situation and in every human situation.¹⁷

Thus the norm or authority for Dr. Tillich is the New Being which is manifest in Jesus the Christ. The Bible as norm is rejected by Dr. Tillich for it is nothing more than "a collection of religious literature written, collected, and edited through the centuries."¹⁸ If it is in any sense a norm for the theologian, it is so because the norm, the biblical message is derived from it. How a theologian is to interpret the Bible then, is determined by his encounter with the biblical message. Thus all norms are a result of a personal experience with the biblical message, but in the end, all norms result from the reality of the New Being which is manifest in Jesus the Christ.

Dr. Tillich sees tradition as the link between the founding of the Church in the New Being as it was manifest in Jesus the Christ and each new generation.¹⁹ It is this tradition that influences each person existentially in his

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., 50.

¹⁹Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), III, 183 f.

encounter with the biblical witness, for it has developed within the Church as it encountered different situations throughout its history in light of the biblical message.

Thus we can see Dr. Tillich's position as the rejection of the authority of either Scripture or tradition. Both are important in the life of the Church, but only as means by which one can encounter the New Being as it was manifested in Jesus the Christ.

K. E. Skydsgaard has written on the problem of Scripture and tradition in the ecumenical movement.²⁰ He most certainly takes a position close to the "new outlook". He acknowledges the oral tradition of the Apostles that preceded the written tradition, but great importance is laid on the fact of the written witness of the Apostles, for this was the Church's evidence of the first proclamation.

By the establishment of these writings as canon, a factual curtailment was accomplished in the stream of the tradition in the fact that it was thereby declared that every later tradition was to be judged and measured by the first apostolic tradition which laid the foundation.²¹

Thus a contradiction between the oral tradition of the Apostles and the Scriptures could not be imagined, for Scripture was the written form of that tradition and the

²⁰K. E. Skydsgaard, One in Christ, trans. Axel C. Kildegaard (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957).

²¹Ibid., 61.

norm for judgment of all future tradition. Dr. Skydsgaard is primarily rejecting the "two sources theory" of revelation. There is but one source of faith, the Scriptures, and this is so because it contains the entire Apostolic witness concerning Jesus Christ. Any tradition that contradicts Scripture is anti-Christian; thus tradition is always secondary to Scripture, it stands judged by Scripture. Tradition can only contain that which is already found within Scripture.²² This position is basically the same as that taken by the "new outlook" in Roman Catholic theology.

As we have seen above, in no way does Dr. Skydsgaard reject the concept of tradition. "Without tradition, life would loose its continuity."²³ The very fact of a handing down from generation to generation links us all to a tradition. This is also true within the Church where through preaching and the creeds, the Apostolic witness is handed down from generation to generation. So, all of existence falls under tradition, but no tradition is infallible, for all tradition must be judged by Scripture. "And the Church can judge all other tradition that appears in its life with no other measure than the apostolic word."²⁴ For Dr. Skydsgaard, "Christ is the Lord of tradition",²⁵ and it is

²²Ibid., 64.

²⁴Ibid., 73.

²³Ibid., 65.

²⁵Ibid., 72.

only through the Scriptures that we can hear Christ. Thus tradition can only be understood in light of Scripture, the Apostolic witness of the Word.

Max Thurian in his Visible Unity and Tradition, also speaks of Scripture as the "trustworthy witness of God's Word".²⁶ Scripture is the place where the essential faith of Christianity can be found; it is a form of visible unity. For Frere Max then, there is but one source of revelation, Scripture, but there is a "vital expansion of this source in every age of the Church, and this vital expansion is Tradition".²⁷ Tradition then is the repeating ever afresh under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God as found in Scripture.

Frere Max devotes a large segment of his work to Tradition and begins this section in the following way.

It is plain to be seen that the longstanding attitude of Protestant apologetics no longer holds--namely, that the Church must base the whole of its teaching on the Bible alone, everything added by the tradition of men being useless, or even dangerous to the purity of the Gospel. This position which was neither of the Reformers nor of the theologians of the seventeenth century, but appeared with various spiritual movements in the nineteenth century, is today entirely out of date.²⁸

²⁶Max Thurian, Visible Unity and Tradition, trans. W. J. Kerrigan (Baltimore:Helican Press, 1962), 10.

²⁷Ibid., 11.

²⁸Ibid., 53 f.

For Frere Max, Tradition is inevitable and necessary for the total understanding of the truth. Regarding the two sources theory of revelation, he goes on to say:

It is no less plain to be seen that the attitude of classical Catholic apologetics is no longer in force either--namely, that Tradition is a second source of Revelation, that it is parallel in rank with the Scriptures, or that Scripture is but an accident in the history of the Church, founded in the first place upon an oral tradition; that tradition preceded the Scriptures, that since it was the Church that determined what was Scripture and what was not, the authority of the Church is above the authority of the Scriptures, and that tradition fills in items omitted from the Scriptures.

Any confrontation of the former positions of the two sides would be, of course, fruitless.²⁹

The problem then is not between Scripture and Tradition, it is rather a problem that arises out of their relationships; in the relationship between revelation and the life of the Church. Thus Frere Max sees Scripture as that which contains the Gospel, and Tradition as the transmission of the Gospel to the world. At no time can Tradition conflict with Scripture, for Tradition, to be genuine, must be the faithful transmission of the Gospel to the world. This transmission takes place in preaching and in the Liturgy; through the proclamation and the act of the Church.

²⁹Ibid., 54.

Oscar Cullmann also rejects the two sources theory in favor of the single source of revelation, Scripture. In line with other theologians, Dr. Cullmann acknowledges the oral tradition that preceded the Canon, but he lays great importance in the fixing of the Canon, for in doing so, the Church had made "a decision that committed the whole future".³⁰ The Church did not deprive itself of its teaching office in this act, rather it gave this teaching office its "exact character".³¹ Thus the Scriptures become the norm of authority for the Church, the Church was by the fixing of the Canon, submitting itself to the judgment of Scripture, the sole source of the content of the Apostolic witness.³² For Dr. Cullmann, it is the responsibility of the Church to interpret Scripture but it must do so under the authority of Scripture, by confronting the biblical text. Tradition is a secondary source and a guide for that interpretation and it must not be set above the word of the Apostles as contained in Scripture.³³ In other words, tradition must never conflict with Scripture. Thus Dr. Cullmann agrees with the "new outlook" on two points: 1. The rejection of the two sources theory, and 2. The point that tradition is necessary for the interpretation of Scripture, but it

³⁰Cullmann, 91.

³²Ibid., 92.

³¹Ibid.

³³Ibid., 97.

can never be the norm for interpretation. The norm for Dr. Cullmann lies in the Apostolic witness as contained in Scripture.

Like Dr. Cullmann, Daniel Jenkins also sees Scripture as the sole norm. But, this is not to say that he has no place for tradition. It was from the tradition of the apostolic Church which Scripture arose, but in doing so, Scripture became the means by which that tradition which followed was to be interpreted. Thus, Dr. Jenkins, like others, distinguishes between two traditions, the oral Apostolic tradition and the ecclesiastical tradition which was to follow the Canon. Both Scripture and the ecclesiastical tradition are a product of the oral Apostolic tradition, but Scripture is given its primacy in the tradition of the Church,

because it is not merely the record of what happens to the people of God, what is commonly called Church History, but also the record of those determinative events in the calling, disciplining and rejection of the Old Israel and the birth of the New in Christ which gives meaning to all the rest of the Church's story and are a constant point of reference for all our actions as the people of God here and now.³⁴

Thus, Scripture has primacy over the tradition, but also, it is within the tradition of the Church that Scripture is

³⁴Daniel Jenkins, Tradition and the Spirit (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1951) 35.

interpreted and the faith handed on to the next generation. So, once again, we see a position where Scripture certainly contains the revelation as witnessed by the Apostles; but without the tradition of the Church, Scripture would not live. Dr. J. N. D. Kelly makes this same distinction, "Thus in the end the Christian must, like Timothy, 'guard the deposit,' i.e., the revelation enshrined in its completeness in Holy Scripture and correctly interpreted in the Church's unerring tradition."³⁵

As this survey has shown, generally two trends can be found in Protestant theology today: (1) We have those who imply Scripture only, as seen in Karl Barth, and (2) Those who see the importance of tradition as seen in Max Thurian and others. Also, a wide range of opinion is expressed among the Protestant denominations.³⁶ We are now faced with the final problem; where, if any place, does modern Roman Catholic and Protestant theology agree on the problem of Scripture and Tradition. Are we at an impasse, or do we face a situation where confusion has been and is the result of misinterpretation and lack of understanding among the two groups.³⁷

³⁵Kelly, 51.

³⁶For a survey of the attitudes among the Protestant denominations, it is suggested that the reader refer to Alan Richardson and W. Schweitzer (ed.), Biblical Authority For Today (London:S.C.M. Press Ltd., 1951).

³⁷The reader may note the absence of any survey of the Eastern Orthodox position. This is not to exclude our Orthodox brethren from any involvement in ecumenical discussion; rather, it was this writer's opinion that the major issues can be seen if the discussion in this paper is limited to the problem as it exists in the Western Church today.

CHAPTER V

THE PROBLEM OF SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION:

THE FUTURE

The problem of Scripture and Tradition, presented another way, is a problem of revelation. Where is revelation contained and how is it to be transmitted? The answers that have been given to this question in the past have brought about an even wider gap between the Protestants and Roman Catholics than was imagined 400 years ago at the time of the Reformation and Counter-reformation.

In this paper we have encountered what can be called the classical positions on Scripture and Tradition from both Roman Catholic and Protestant points of view. Both appear to be the result of later interpretations of the Reformation and the Council of Trent.

The classical Roman Catholic view is one of equal authority and respect to both Scripture and Tradition. Both, it is claimed, contain revelation, and both are preserved by the Church, through its unbroken Apostolic Succession. Due to this, Roman Catholic theologians can claim an opinion to be valid, even if it is not contained in Scripture. If rather, it has always been a part of the teaching of the Church, i.e., its tradition, the opinion can then be named

dogma; it becomes part of the truth of the Christian faith. This statement can be made because it is felt that Trent said this in 1548. It is felt that Trent said that the truth of the Christian faith is contained, partly in Scripture and partly in Tradition, and it is for the Church to determine what is truth in both Scripture and Tradition. This is the popular interpretation of Trent, and so also of Scripture and Tradition in the Roman Catholic Church today. As we shall see later, it is questioned by some, even within the Roman Catholic Church, whether or not the above is a valid interpretation.

The classical Protestant position is also based on an interpretation, in this case the interpretation of the Reformers of the sixteenth century. This position rejects any concept of Tradition, except in the sense that in any historical development, traditions develop that connect one generation to the next. In no sense though, does tradition hold any authority as a source of revelation. Also, in no sense can tradition be a final guide in the interpretation of Scripture, the one and only authority for the Christian faith. The manner of interpretation will vary from generation to generation. No authority such as the Church can be found that can determine how the Scriptures are to be interpreted. (Please see above.) All are subordinate to

the Scriptures, for it is the Scriptures that contain the Word of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. All, in this case, refers to tradition and the Church. If the Bible is to be interpreted, we must look at the Bible, and not at the Church to see how the Bible can be interpreted, for only in the Bible is the Word of God contained and no place else.

When the above classical positions are compared, there is, in fact, no common meeting ground between the two. The problem of Scripture and Tradition remains in this case a problem, and on that is unreconcilable. But, Erle Max has pointed out that both positions no longer hold.¹ Both interpretations are in fact misinterpretations of what had really been said at the Reformation and Counter-reformation. If the literature that has been printed since 1950 is a standard on which we may base a statement, it can be said that there are many others, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, who agree with Erle Max. The works that have been surveyed have shown us that today there are many who feel that the positions that have come after the Reformation and Counter-reformation are misinterpretations of what had actually been said.

¹Thurian, 53 f.

Gabriel Moran, F. S. C. points to the establishment of the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin in 1950, as the time when many Roman Catholic theologians began to seriously consider extra-scriptural tradition as a norm for statements of dogma.² In order to study the problem thoroughly, it became necessary to consider also the statement made by the Council of Trent in 1548. Such study has made it possible for Roman theologians to make such statements as follows: "Contrary to what is often believed, the Council of Trent did not endorse the notion of the two sources of faith."³ Thus, we have among the Roman Catholic theologians, some who Xavier Rynne calls the "new outlook." It is this group that makes the statements outlined in Chapter II: that Scripture contains all the revelation, that the interpretation of that Scripture and its transmission is tradition and finally, the Church, acting under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is the agent of that interpretation and transmission. Thus, the "new outlook" does not separate Scripture and Tradition into two equal but separate sources, rather Tradition is Scripture rightly interpreted in and by

²Gabriel Moran, Scripture and Tradition (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), 22. This book is quite valuable in the treatment of the problem in the modern Roman Catholic Church.

³Tavard, Dialogue for Reunion the Catholic Premises, 66.

the Church. Thus, we have in the Roman Church today, a new point of view that is not really new, for it is close to the position of the early Church and the Fathers.

A new position within Protestantism has also been noted in Chapter IV. If anything has brought this about, it has been the development of modern Biblical investigation. Now, because of the work that has been done in that area, we can see, and most accept or are accepting, the concept of oral transmission. Most will now agree that the Scriptures find a basis in an oral transmission of the teachings of the Apostles about the revelation in Jesus Christ. Thus, there was an oral transmission, an oral tradition of the Apostolic witness before there was a written form of the Apostolic witness. Those who hold to the new position in Protestantism, then, cannot deny the importance of tradition, for even Scripture finds its basis in tradition. Scripture still remains the sole source of revelation, but tradition has found an important position as the right interpretation of Scripture and the correct transmission from one generation to another.

Basically, as we can see, the "new outlook" of the Roman Catholic Church and the new position in Protestantism agree on Scripture as the sole source of revelation and Tradition as the right interpretation of Scripture and its

correct transmission from one generation to another. For both there is but one revelation; the final revelation in Jesus Christ and it continues in the life of the Church through the work of the Holy Spirit. Disagreement enters over the authority of the Church.

The "new outlook" in the Roman Church sees the Church as the sole agent of the interpretation of Scripture. The new position in Protestantism would basically agree here, for only the Church should interpret the Scriptures. But is the teaching of the Church infallible? Father Danielou would say yes, since the Church has been given the authority to teach through Christ. This is not to say that the Scriptures are fallible, rather, the Scriptures are infallible in that they contain the total revelation, but also, the Church is infallible in what it teaches about that revelation. The Bible reveals infallibly and the Church transmits infallibly. The new position in Protestantism disagrees. The Church in its teachings may be fallible. Thus, the Church is always subordinate to the Scriptures. As Dr. Cullmann states, the Church did, by the fixing of the Canon, release all claim to infallibility.

This certainly is a problem and it is one that must be worked out if unity is to occur. But, even though a problem still exists, it exists on a different level. The survey

has shown that we have reached a point where we can no longer speak of Scripture and Tradition as separate. Now our questions must be of the relationship between the two. The classical interpretations left us at an impasse. The new positions that correspond to the early Church have given us the basis to begin to look for answers to our questions.

Will the separated Church ever meet in agreement on the basic issue of Scripture and Tradition? Will it come to be the unified Body of Christ God calls it to be? It is difficult to be a prophet at this point, but this writer feels that answers to the difficult problem of Scripture and Tradition are now possible, where once they were not. Once we were at an impasse, now we are at the start of an answer. Through dialogue and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the coming great Church may now become a reality where once it was just a hope.

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